STUDY PROJECT

U.S. ARMY GROUPS: SHERMAN TO BRADLEY

BY

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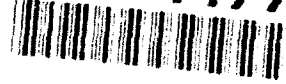
USAWC CLASS OF 1993

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050



Uncl
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified	1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY	3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army War College 6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Root Hall, Building 122 Carlisle, PA 17013-5050	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION 8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS PROGRAM ELEMENT NO. / PROJECT NO. / TASK NO. / WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO

11. TITLE (Include Security Classification)
U.S. Army Groups: Sherman to Bradley - UNCL

12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)
LTC James P. Fairall, Jr.

13a. TYPE OF REPORT	13b. TIME COVERED	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day)	15. PAGE COUNT
Study Project	FROM _____ TO _____	93 Apr 22	47

16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION

17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	

19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

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20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT	21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION
☒ UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT. ☐ DTIC USERS	Unclassified
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Dr Jay Luvaas	22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 717/245-3207
	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL DNSS

DD Form 1473, JUN 86 *Previous editions are obsolete.* SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE
Unclassified

19. Abstract continued:

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

U.S. ARMY GROUPS: SHERMAN TO BRADLEY

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: James P. Fairall, Jr., LTC, USA

TITLE: U.S. Army Groups, Sherman to Bradley

FORMAT: Individual Study Project

DATE: 30 April 1993 PAGES: 47 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The Group of Armies is one of the largest formations that the U.S. Army uses. This study looks at the future utility of the Group of Armies by looking at approximately eighty years of U.S. military history.

The first Army Group, although not formally named as such, was commanded by General Sherman in the Civil War Atlanta Campaign in the summer of 1864. Sherman commanded three separate armies against a dug-in confederate force commanded by general Johnston. General Pershing also commanded a group of Armies briefly at the end of World War I. Confronted with divisive political problems in Europe, a poorly trained and led American Army, and characterized by an overwhelming micro-managing style, Pershing was literally forced to split his American Expeditionary Force into two separate armies about a month before the end of the war in 1918.

During the interwar years, the army began to doctrinally consider its' organization and fighting principles. One emerging concept was the formal recognition of the Group Of Armies in the late 1930's. Although only studied conceptually, General Bradley led the Twelfth Army Group, consisting of three armies against the heart of the German Army in World War II.

Since the doctrinal foundation of the Army Group is one of command and control, recent innovations in communications and automation capability obviates the need for this formation that was once so valuable.

More than anything else, technology has been the catalyst to modify the way soldiers organize for war. From man's early wars to the present, battle formations were structured as technology would allow. Such ancient innovations as the chariot and the catapult gave soldiers flexibility of maneuver undreamed of in the first thousand years of warfare. Modern inventions of the past one hundred years have been even more catalyzing. Radios, armored vehicles, and helicopters all forced organizational structure changes because of the advantage they provided one army over another. Just as technology caused reorganization it also drove an increasing reliance on command and control.

When compared to their modern counterpart, ancient armies required a relatively uncomplicated system of command and control. Soldiers fought as a dependant part of their parent formation, similar to parade formations in use today. Each soldier moved in exactly the same direction. When a formation moves in relative unison there is little need for sophisticated command and control.

Early Roman soldiers, armed with swords, maces, axes and spears were the first to fight within a combat formation, while at the same time remaining somewhat independent of the movement of their parent unit.[1] The Romans were the first to encounter

the need for command and control that later armies would find so challenging. The modern leader may still command his formation into battle like his Roman counterpart, but the similarity ends there. The sheer size of modern forces and centuries of technological development have created large, mobile, and cumbersome formations with near overwhelming requirements for command and control.

The U.S. Army has evolved into three large formations for controlling battle; the Field Army, the Group of Armies, and the Theater Army. The differences between the three are minimal at best. The Field Army and the Theater Army functions are relatively straight forward. The Field Army controls up to five subordinate corps. The Theater Army performs more of a housekeeping function, and involves itself with rear area real estate management, organizing, equipping, training and maintaining army forces in the theater. Originally conceived as strictly a tactical formation to control field armies,[2] contemporary functions of the Group of Armies are not as well defined. The modern Group of Armies appears to be a redundant formation that includes the functions of both the Field Army and the Theater Army.[3]

The U.S. Army has enough current experience with the Field Army and the Theater Army. Although they may also need some

intellectual study, both remain functional and understood, having been employed during Desert Storm. There is no soldier on active duty, however, who can lay claim to having served in an army group headquarters. It is therefore necessary to look at the group of armies through the critical lens that can only be provided by history.

This paper will concentrate on the Group of Armies and will overlay the role of evolving doctrine over the dynamics of three separate army groups employed in The Civil War, World War I and World War II. Each Group of Armies will be examined on the basis of the commander, its organization, mission and performance. The historical record will provide the basis to determine whether Army Groups are as necessary now as they were in the past. Using the parameters of doctrine, the discipline of the historical record, and the potential of evolving technology, this analysis will show that Groups of Armies, although a rich part of military history, are no longer justifiable.

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

After one hundred thirty years, U.S. Army warfighting doctrine still considers the Group of Armies necessary, even though doctrine itself recognizes that the U.S. Army has not deployed one since World War II.[4] An army that prides itself

on flexibility and logical evolution, should be able to continually evaluate its structure objectively. Each layer of that structure should be forced to stand on its own merits.

Priority for developing organizational structures in the U.S. Army rightfully starts at the forward edge of the battlefield, and works its' way to the rear. Once the small units at the forward part of the battle are organized and equipped, the process should then walk backward to the larger units to insure a cohesive battlefield whole that focuses weapons, soldier training, and organization on the enemy.

In the twentieth century history the U.S. Army has done well at looking at the forward battle. It has repeatedly studied, analyzed, and tinkered with small unit formations from division level and below, searching for the optimal organization. Divisions have rightfully been the basic organizational structure start point for other analyses. Once doctrine writers developed sound concepts for how the division was to fight, they turned their attention to the lower echelon brigades, battalions and companies.

In the late seventies, and early eighties doctrine writers turned their attention to the corps. It became the lynch pin of the operational level of war, and the largest self contained

battle element. The Army rewrote its doctrine and reorganized and reequiped its units. The development of the Multiple Launch Rocket System was an example of the type of weapons systems the Army developed in an effort to allow the corps commander to influence the forward battle. Thus, the army has looked doctrinally at the corps with some of the same vigor that it historically reserves only for the division. Interestingly, the army rarely looks higher.

Perhaps there are several reasons for not studying the formations that reside above the corps. First, the American way of war looks for the smallest formation possible to do the job. The modern opportunities to deploy large units simply have not justified the exhaustive effort it would take to evaluate how echelons above corps (EAC) should be organized. Second, Field Armies, Theater Armies, and Groups of Armies are commanded by much more senior officers than their divisional, brigade and battalion counterparts. At the lowest level the army reduces tasks to rote, much like the routine of a factory assembly line. The command and control mission of EAC units, complex in nature, cannot be routinized. Three and four star generals do not need the detailed guidance, typically required at the lower levels. While understandable, we spend precious little time thinking about EAC formations, as evidenced by a virtual nonexistence of doctrinal guidance to support them.

DESERT STORM

Army Groups were not used during Operation Desert Storm. The Third Army, commanded by Lieutenant General John Yeosock, was the largest formation deployed for command and control of ground forces. The Army that achieved fame by racing across Europe, commanded by General Patton in World War II did not quite fare as well in the desert. Yeosock reports difficulty in organizing his own headquarters, and in dealing with his next higher headquarters, as well as his subordinate commands.[5]

The Third Army was organized in 1982 as the Army Component Headquarters for the U.S. Central Command, the joint command with the responsibility for much of the middle east. In World War II, Patton functioned only as a field army. Yeosock functioned simultaneously as a Theater Army commander, a service component commander, as well as a Field Army commander. The diversity of his mission caused Yeosock and his staff some difficulty in establishing responsibilities and missions.[6] The problems Yeosock encountered in Desert Storm clearly points to a need for doctrinal development of the echelon above corps army.

The U.S. Army has deployed Groups of Armies four times in history. Major General William T. Sherman commanded a group of armies during the Civil War. General John J. Pershing command a

Group of Armies briefly at the end of World War I. And Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, and Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers commanded Army Groups during World War II. Yeosock had at least one thing in common with each of these famous commanders. None was supported by doctrine any better than Yeosock was in Desert Storm.

THE ROLE OF DOCTRINE

"An army's fundamental doctrine is the condensed expression of its approach to fighting. It must be rooted in time tested theories and principles. It must be definitive enough to guide operations. To be useful, doctrine must be uniformly known and understood."[7] These words from the U.S Army's capstone doctrinal manual clearly articulate the importance we place on a firm foundation of conceptual guidance. But, doctrine is a relatively new term which evolved largely since the turn of the century. Earlier commanders had no common body of knowledge to describe how to fight.

Civil War generals had no written doctrine for guidance. Even West Point instruction was of little help. Although the War of 1812 should still have been a reminder to Americans of the need for military expertise, early 1800 West Point was engrossed in other areas. "In a country, not immediately imperiled by

foreign armies, and jealous of standing armies, the academy had to justify itself by preparing officers who could do useful work in peace, so it became largely a school of civil engineering."[8]

What little doctrine Sherman may have encountered at West Point in the late 1830's was Napoleonic based. The engineering slant to an academy education would likely have produced doctrine based on Jomini, when the Civil War fell closer to the Clauswitzian model. But, Clauswitz was not translated into English until 1873,[9] and not even seriously considered by the U.S. military for another one hundred years. It is likely, lacking any doctrinal foundation, that Sherman had no intellectual notion of how to command a group of armies.

General Pershing also had only the meagerest idea of the purpose of the group. A graduate of the West Point class of 1886, Pershing's doctrinal education mirrored Sherman's. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, the army had only seriously been thinking about doctrine for ten years. One of Pershing's corps commanders summed up U.S. doctrine best when he said, "I can find nothing in the mass of literature I have received which teaches this to me."[10] Only after Secretary of War Elihu Root's military reforms in 1903, did the study of doctrine truly begin, much too late to help Pershing.[11]

Bradley was more fortunate than Sherman and Pershing in the sense that by World War II, doctrine had not only been studied, but had been codified in Field Manuals. At both The Command and General Staff College, and at the Army War College groups of armies had been studied, "but only in vague and theoretical terms."[12]

By 1939, the army had written a series of "Tentative Field Manuals" specifically designed to establish the common denominator that doctrine provides to guide battlefield actions. FM 100-5, "Operations," established early warfighting doctrine. It specified that "several armies together may be organized into a group of armies under a designated commander."[13] By 1942, FM-100-15, "Larger Units," discussed the subject in much more detail. It provided the actual purpose of the group as follows: "two or more armies placed under a designated commander for the accomplishment of a particular task, the execution of which requires coordination and control by one commander."[14] It also defined the group to have a specific mission, be a tactical unit, have no territorial jurisdiction, and have virtually no administrative or logistics responsibility.[15]

Such was the doctrinal guidance General Bradley took to war on the continent of Europe. While Sherman and Pershing had to operate strictly out of honed instinct, Bradley's command at

least had some codified basis. But, with such broad guidance, it is difficult to say that Bradley had an adequate doctrinal foundation either. On the contrary, he most likely relied on the same instincts for large unit warfare as his predecessors.

The standard for a Group of Armies established by the 1942 field Manual failed to survive. The discussion of "Larger Units" that doctrine writers thought important enough in 1942 to discuss in a separate field manual survives today as only three pages in the back of FM 100-5 (Operations). It may be argued that the subject of larger units needs no more doctrinal discussion than it currently gets. It is undisputed, though, that it is nearly impossible to separate the functions of the group from the Field Army and the Theater Army, as currently defined. At best, the army has taken a battle formation, once well understood, and relegated it to a confusing status. Without a sound doctrinal basis, we must look to history if we are to clearly understand the Group of Armies.

SHERMAN AND PERSHING

By the winter of 1963-64 the U.S. Civil war had ground on for almost three years. Major General Ulysses S. Grant was in command of the vast military division of the Mississippi, located near Chattanooga. Sherman commanded the Army of the Tennessee, a

subordinate element of Grant's division of the Mississippi.[16] Seeking to maintain the momentum he created at Vicksburg, Grant was planning a campaign that envisioned a line of attack through Chattanooga and Atlanta to "some point on the coast."[17] But, other events would steer command of the Atlanta Campaign away from Grant, and into the hands of Sherman.

President Abraham Lincoln, weary of the growing stalemate in the east, summoned Grant to Washington in early March 1864, and offered him command of all federal forces. Grant accepted Lincoln's offer, then nominated Sherman to replace him as the commanding general of the Division of the Mississippi. Lincoln approved and Sherman took command on the 18th of March 1864.[18]

When Grant returned from Washington after the meeting with Lincoln he asked Sherman to accompany him to Cincinnati for a strategy session to formulate a plan to defeat the south. They agreed on a plan of exhaustion, attacking in two theaters against a fragmented confederate army. Sherman would execute Grant's plan to attack to the east through Atlanta against General Joseph E. Johnston. Major General George B. Meade would attack south toward Richmond with the Army of Northern Virginia against the army of General Robert E. Lee. Grant would campaign with Meade, in the east but he still commanded all federal forces.[19]

When Sherman ascended to command the Division of the Mississippi, he selected Major General James B. McPherson to succeed him as commander of the Army of the Tennessee. Major General George H. Thomas commanded the Army of the Cumberland. Major General John M. Schofield commanded the Army of the Ohio. Prior to the Atlanta Campaign, the Division Of the Mississippi also included the Army of the Arkansas, commanded by Major General Frederick Steele.[20] However, the Army of the Arkansas was transferred from Sherman prior to the start of the Atlanta Campaign.[21]

Sherman's Division of the Mississippi easily passes the test for a Group of Armies even though a definition for such an echelon of command would not doctrinally exist in writing until the 1942 version of FM 100-15. With three subordinate armies totalling 100,000 soldiers it met the requirement for a large force. The armies were placed under a specific commander to accomplish a particular task requiring coordination and control by one commander. The Atlanta Campaign resulted in the elimination of a main southern transportation hub, and the destruction of Johnston's sizeable army. The strategy was brilliant but could have failed. The flawless execution, simplified by the creation of a Group of Armies, allowed Sherman to focus the full force of a powerful army on an enemy center of gravity.

The next example of an army group commander came forty four years later. In the difficult attrition style of warfare in World War I, an exasperated Pershing was literally forced to establish a Group of Armies. Besieged politically for the poor showing of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), Pershing found himself overwhelmed by an unwieldy span of control of twenty divisions. Partly from pressure from his seniors he created an Army Group headquartered at Ligney-en-Barrois, France, in early October, 1918.[22]

The U.S. entered World War I with both a quantitative and qualitatively inferior army. The regular army and national guard numbered slightly over two hundred thousand troops in April 1917. The size of the force paled by comparison when against an ultimate wartime requirement that would be measured in millions eighteen months later. Experienced soldiers and leaders did not exist either. "The army had not even developed contingency plans for pulling together a large force for participation in the World War, having been forbidden to do so by President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, both visionaries who believed a nation could remain aloof from war by refusing to prepare for it. The Western Front meant trained divisions, corps, field armies, and army groups, while the U.S. Army still thought in terms of detachments, troops, squadrons and regiments."[23]

Overcoming the serious deficiencies of the gutted U.S Army was difficult business. Pershing became much like the current theater commander in that he assumed great responsibilities for logistics, training and administration. Although we would consider it contrary to current policies that strive to allow the battlefield commander to focus entirely on the fight at hand, in 1917, Pershing's span of control included much more. Unbelievable as it may seem now, Pershing actually conducted training in the theater of war, which today would be conducted by the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) as institutional training. So basic was the training that Pershing conducted, that it included such fundamentals as acclimatization and instruction of small units; hardening of soldiers to fire; and divisional level training.[24] He established thirteen schools in each of his subordinate corps that mirrored the TRADOC school system we know today.[25] It is little wonder that Pershing was distracted from his primary mission of warfighting.

Despite the efforts of the army and the AEF to overcome the corporate shortfalls that existed, Pershing found himself at the point of political criticism for the poor American showing throughout the war. The Army's ineffectiveness quickly became the subject of political debate, and Pershing, equally as fast, found himself the subject of intense and personal political scrutiny. Senior political leaders were unanimous in their

criticism. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George showed uncharacteristic frustration, referring to Pershing as "most difficult," and his army as "quite ineffective." He even directed the British Emissary to the U.S., Lord Reading, to complain directly to President Wilson that Pershing's army was not ready for combat and detracted from the allied effort. When Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the British Commander in Chief, developed a plan for a massive pincer movement on the western front using the U.S Army to man one side of the "claw of the crab," the Prime Minister declared, " The American staff has not got the experience, Wilson should know these facts, which are being withheld from him."[26]

The French criticism was equally harsh. Premier Georges Clemenceau noted, "Pershing was handling his men badly and causing unnecessary casualties. He is not making the progress he should and that which the other allies are making."[27] Others talked of the chaotic nature of the Americans. While some of the blame certainly belongs to an ill tempered, micromanaging Pershing, the fault would have been more fair if it were more widespread.

Pershing directly controlled twenty divisions with a staff characterized by "newness and inexperienced."[28] Modern leadership and management doctrine would look unfavorably on such

a large span of control. Faced with such difficulties, Pershing split his First Army into two field armies. The US Second Army, under the command of Major General Robert l. Bullard, was assigned the eastern sector. The First US Army, Pershings original command, was assigned the Western US sector, under the command of Major General Hunter Liggett.[29]

Pershing could claim to have commanded several armies together for only a short period of time. He faced a badly mauled and demoralized German army. But his reorganized forces emerged a consolidated command, focused singularly on the campaign through the Meuse-Argonne until the end of the war six weeks later.

By the 1942 doctrinal standard, Pershing truly commanded a Group of Armies. But, much like General Yeosock in Desert Storm, he was burdened with a much broader mission which greatly impacted his duties as a warfighter. Pershing stands somewhat separate from Sherman and Bradley, not only because his group was shortlived, but because he created it so reluctantly. Sherman and Bradley needed little convincing that the force they would lead would be too large and unwieldy, unless formed into a Group of Armies.

General Bradley achieved great fame during World War II as the commander of U.S. ground troops during the Normandy invasion and later as the commander of the Twelfth Army Group. But the initial task of organizing the group fell to General Devers, rather than to Bradley. While the Twelfth Group was being formed in anticipation of the cross channel invasion, Bradley was serving in Africa and not even assigned to the European Theater of Operations (ETO). The story of his rise to become a group commander involves a rare combination of events, strategy, and personal relationships, involving himself, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Devers. The story of how each of them got into position to play a critical role in the history of the Twelfth Group begins with their two and a half decade long personal relationship with Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, and with the race to develop a cogent strategy to win the war.

The preferred U.S. strategy in World War II was a concentrated attack on the mainland of Europe in 1942 to break the back of the Germans, and result in a quick surrender. In June 1942 Marshall assigned Eisenhower to become the first American commander in the ETO, assigning him to London.[30] Aware of his abilities as a staff officer, Marshall probably saw Eisenhower as a major planner in the invasion he himself would command. The British, however, saw the direct invasion of Europe as too risky,

and preferred to fight on the periphery of the ever increasing circle of world conflict. The considerable pressure from Churchill, and Russian insistence on an attack in 1942 led the Americans to compromise and back an invasion of North Africa.[31]

The decision to invade North Africa occurred within a month of Eisenhower's arrival in London. The change in priorities forced Marshall to draft Eisenhower to divert his attention from Europe and begin planning the African invasion.[32] In the Fall of 1942, Eisenhower departed London to establish an invasion headquarters in Gibraltar. To replace Eisenhower, Marshall selected Air Force General Frank M. Andrews. When Andrews died in an airplane crash, Marshall selected Devers, who had been assigned as Eisenhower's deputy, to become the second commanding general of the ETO.[33] So, Devers became the officer who initially organized the Twelfth Army Group and for the unlikliest of reasons: politics, which drove an Africa first strategy; and because of Marshall's decision to use Eisenhower in Africa.

Devers set out at once on several vectors. His most immediate problem was to plan the invasion, a complicated, political mine field in itself. He also had the difficult task of organizing and equipping units. "As the American commander in the European Theater of War, Devers doubled in brass. Not only was he to accumulate troops and equipment for the channel

invasion, but he was also to act as watchdog for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of staff on combined invasion planning with the British."[34]

Devers greatest challenge was the inherent difficulty of invasion planning. Serious logistics questions had to be answered before any invasion plan could become reality, and the force had to be organized into a viable entity that passed the intense scrutiny of both the U.S. and British governments. The salient problem was landing craft for strategic lift which was grossly inadequate to deliver the sizeable force required on the Normandy beaches.

Overlord planning was assigned to the Supreme Allied Command, under the watchful eye of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and under the direction of British Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan. By September 1943, Morgan, as the COSSAC (Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Command, a forerunner of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, or SHAEF), was nearing completion of his assigned mission "to study the possibilities of mounting a cross channel invasion." Every planner, from Morgan to Devers was consumed by the lift problem.[35] As 1943 wore on, it became increasingly clear that the problem was so wide in scope that neither Morgan nor Devers could solve it. When the Combined Chiefs of Staff determined the lift problem required a

national solution Morgan and Devers then concentrated their main focus on the actual organization for combat.

ORGANIZING OVERLORD

The invasion plan, as outlined by COSSAC, envisioned one American and Two British divisions under the command of a British Army.[36] Once on the continent, US forces would increase quickly to an army size organization. By prior political agreement, the nation with the majority of the forces should be in overall command. Therefore, the First US Army would report to a British Army Group which would be formed to capture the Britainy peninsula. Devers, in his role to insure the "American view prevailed in balance"[37] objected to the COSSAC plan for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, Devers and the US War Department thought the plan encroached upon the authority of the supreme commander. Devers insisted upon the US principle that the commander should have maximum freedom of operation, even to determine the subordinate chain of command. The British philosophy was almost the exact opposite. "The Americans believed that it was sufficient for the combined chiefs to assign the supreme commander a mission and leave to his discretion all the details of how that mission should be carved out. They viewed with alarm the British tendency to extend the control from the highest level, down through the echelons of command, narrowly

specifying the functions of subordinate commanders."[38]

The polar extreme opposite positions of the British and the Americans framed a debate that raged on through October 1943, leaving Devers little time to organize the subordinate commands. However, he was able to convince the War Department in the summer of 1943 of the need to create two separate headquarters to begin U.S. planning in earnest. By August, the War Department agreed to identify an army commander, and further allowed Devers to create a skeleton army group headquarters.[39]

The rest of the invasion organization became bogged down by the heads of state who first delayed over the nationality of the supreme commander, then by identifying him by name. Both the generals and the politicians were characterized more by the lack of decision than an overabundance of it. How the force would be organized ultimately came about by decisions made by Marshall, and executed by others under the false assumption that the American Chief of Staff would be named the supreme commander.

The test to determine the nationality of the commander was developed by Churchill at the Casablanca Conference in early 1943. He argued successfully that the country with the preponderance of the troops and equipment rightfully should claim the command position. His premise though, assumed an invasion in

1943 when the British would contribute the bulk of the effort. By 1944, when the invasion would finally occur the Americans had the majority of the troops and materiel committed. Thus, using the Churchill test, the U.S. laid rightful claim to the supreme commander position.[40] Once the nationality of the supreme commander was determined to be American, conventional wisdom and common sense suggested that Marshall was the logical choice.

Marshall began to direct invasion activities, assuming that the job was his. General Morgan believed it also, and began executing Marshall's decisions. When Morgan returned from a month long trip to Washington in November 1943, he brought back Marshall's instructions on how to organize. "He knows exactly what I want", Marshall told *Devers*."[41] As a result of the "instructions" Morgan drafted a directive, placing General Bernard L. Montgomery's British 21st Army Group, over the American First Army, the British Second Army, and the Canadian First Army.[42] Finally, the command relationships were set, and because Marshall established a chain of command when no one else would, he also set the authority of the supreme commander to decide the chain of command as he wished. In the same month, irrespective of Marshall's actions, Roosevelt would decide something altogether different.

The Teheran Conference in November 1943 convened the

American, British and Soviet leaders to map out the invasion. Stalin argued that failure to appoint a supreme allied commander was tantamount to a stall. Backed into a corner Roosevelt finally made his decision. Eisenhower would command the invasion. Despite the common allied belief that the commander would be Marshall, Roosevelt felt he could not spare him. "When Marshall was out of the country, (Roosevelt) could not sleep at night. It had to be Ike."[43]

Marshall, although disappointed, received the decision with typical stoic acceptance. A few days after the decision, he forwarded Roosevelt's decision memorandum to Eisenhower, with the simple note, "I thought you might like to have this as a momentum."[44] Thus sealed the fate of several decisions. First, Eisenhower was the man. Second, because of Marshall's decisions when he thought he was going to be in charge, the supreme commander would have considerable latitude in his subordinate chain of command. But Marshall still held the reins of power when it came to U.S. Army personnel assignments. He did not delegate that responsibility to Eisenhower, or anyone else for that matter. Although Roosevelt chose Eisenhower, Marshall chose Eisenhower's Lieutenants.

THE SUPREME COMMANDER

In December 1943, when Marshall informed Eisenhower, still in North Africa, that he would be the allied commander of Overlord, Eisenhower immediately began drafting the organization he wanted. He quickly discovered that Marshall intended to be a wielding force in the selection of the senior commanders. In an attempt to associate names with positions Eisenhower sought to feel Marshall out regarding the Chief of Staff's plans. On the seventeenth of December, 1943, Eisenhower offered his own list of names to Marshall, while admitting he was "working in the dark because of lack of knowledge of your plans for particular individuals."[45]

Eisenhower believed the narrow front on the Normandy beachhead favored a single ground commander. And a single ground commander was incompatible with both a British and American tactical Air Force, and two air commanders. Instead he suggested a single ground commander complimented by a single tactical air commander. He also favored British General Sir Harold R.L.G Alexander, the only allied officer with experience commanding an Army Group in North Africa, and British Air Marshall Arthur Tedder as Alexander's tactical air counterpart. As Eisenhower quickly discovered, Marshall saw the supreme commander as having full authority to organize as he wished, but the assignment of senior officers to key positions was, at best, a shared responsibility with the Army Chief of Staff.[46]

GENERAL MARSHALL, GENERAL EISENHOWER, AND GENERAL BRADLEY

General Bradley came to the attention of Eisenhower and Marshall by separate routes. His association with Marshall began at Fort Benning in 1929, when Bradley taught tactics, and Marshall was the Infantry School Assistant Commandant. Bradley later called his choice to come to Fort Benning as the "most fortunate decision of my life."[47] Bradley's association with Marshall began a two decade long relationship. If Bradley had a mentor, it was Marshall.

In 1939, Lieutenant Colonel Bradley again went to work for Marshall. When Marshall became the Army Chief of Staff he hired Bradley as an aide to sort through the myriad of documents prepared by the army staff, and condense and brief them to Marshall.[48] This job kept Bradley constantly in his mentor's eye. Less than two years later, Marshall promoted Bradley to brigadier general, bypassing the grade of colonel, and assigned him as the commandant of the Infantry School in March, 1941.[49]

Within a month of Pearl Harbor, he reassigned him to command the 82d Division, a precursor of the current 82d Airborne Division. In June 1942 he assigned Bradley to command the 28th National Guard Division, and in February 1943 to command X corps, But before Bradley even departed the 28th Division located at

Camp Gordon Johnson, Florida, Marshall changed his mind and redirected him to assist Eisenhower in North Africa.[50]

Marshall was the common denominator between Bradley and Eisenhower. Eisenhower had come to Marshall's attention during the 1941 Louisiana maneuvers. In early 1942, Marshall appointed Eisenhower as the chief of the War Plans Division, and quickly thereafter, sent him on to Europe.[51] Eisenhower's early performance in North Africa was dubious at best. Early defeats in Tunisia and at Kasserine Pass began to shake Marshall's confidence in his battlefield commander. With orders in hand to take command of the X Corps, Bradley was understandably disappointed when Marshall decided to send him to Africa instead, to serve on Eisenhower staff. Bradley's mission was ostensibly to act as Eisenhower's eyes and ears throughout the African command. More than likely, Marshall was attempting to support Eisenhower during a difficult time with quality officers.[52]

Prior to his arrival in North Africa, Bradley described his association with Eisenhower as merely casual, despite graduating together in the West Point class of 1915. "Although we knew one another at West Point thirty years before, serving in the same company, we had not been close."[53] Despite the separate career paths, Eisenhower knew Bradley, mostly by reputation, and held him in high regard. In fact, in July 1942, as Eisenhower

prepared his list of recommended commanders for the North African invasion, he listed Bradley as one of four potential officers to lead the American force.[54] After the war, Eisenhower wrote of his high esteem for Bradley as the ideal choice for the eyes and ears mission. He relied on his sound emotional stability, grasp of high level issues, and keen judge of character.[55] Once establishing himself with Eisenhower, Bradley quickly moved on to take command of the US II Corps, which fought to the conclusion of the war in North Africa, then deployed and fought through the Italian campaign.

Meanwhile in London, General Devers had received approval to establish an Army headquarters. On 25 August 1943, Marshall cabled Eisenhower to inform him that Bradley was his choice for command of First US Army, and asked if he could be released immediately.[56] When Eisenhower responded regretfully but affirmatively, Marshall sent word to Bradley to depart immediately for England with the dual mission to create an Army headquarters and establish an Army group "in order to keep pace with British planning."[57]

Marshall and Eisenhower were determined from the beginning to put Bradley in charge of the Group of Armies. Bradley, himself expressed some doubt when he indicated years later that he assumed Devers would command the group. In virtually all the

correspondence between Eisenhower and Marshall, it was clear that Bradley was to get the command, almost as if there was no other officer who could do it.

GENERAL BRADLEY AND THE TWELFTH ARMY GROUP

Bradley arrived in London in September 1943 to assume his new duties. The fight and the confusion over the Overlord chain of command continued in high gear. The need for an American Field Army and the somewhat nebulous mission to create a group headquarters were the only real decisions that had been made. Regardless of the confusion that existed over the appointment of the supreme commander, Bradley had enough freedom of action to get on with the two missions he was given. He also believed Marshall would be the supreme commander, and relished the thought of working for his mentor again. He knew Marshall well and could count on him for support and reasoned guidance. Nonetheless, he was still in the dark over his immediate chain of command, since there was the likelihood of a layer of command between him and Marshall. "Still unanswered was the question as to who was to be my senior commander. There were three possibilities at stake: I could report directly to the supreme commander, to an intermediary ground commander-in-chief, or more probably to an Army Group commander."[58] If a precedent were possible with such a short history of such large scale warfare, it would have

come from Africa, where General Alexander commanded two armies. But, regardless of the immediate chain of command, Bradley understood what he was supposed to do, and established the First Army headquarters in Europe in October 1943.

The soldiers assigned to the First Army staff came from a variety a places, including the existing staff deployed from Governors Island, New York. Some officers Bradley had reassigned from the II Corps staff, and the rest from the normal personnel pipeline.[59] Devers, in spite of his more encompassing duties of fending off the British, continued staffing the group headquarters. He had already chosen the bulk of the principal staff.[60] By the time the Group was officially constituted on the continent, Bradley would only have to transfer a G-1, and an enlisted and two officer aides from the First Army staff.[61]

For the next eight months the First U.S. Army and the First U.S. Army Group remained preoccupied with Overlord planning and the invasion itself. Finally, on November 29th the final decision was announced by General Morgan. The Normandy invasion would begin with General Montgomery, as a group commander in command of the ground assault forces. The US First Army, commanded by Bradley, would be subordinate to the British.[62] However, the arrangement was only intended to be temporary, until such time as the supreme commander could move his headquarters

onto the continent and take control of both U.S. and British forces. Subsequently, the American force would expand into a second army, necessitating creation of First US Army Group. Although Marshall did not become the supreme commander, his general plan for organization of the invasion remained when Eisenhower took over. In Eisenhower's mind, Bradley would command the First U.S. Army along side a British army commander, reporting directly to Montgomery's British army group. When the front widened, Bradley would form an American Army Group reporting directly to Eisenhower.[63] Much in line with the American view of the commanders prerogative, Eisenhower left it to Bradley to establish the timing to activate his First Army Group headquarters. On July 14th, Eisenhower cabled Bradley and ordered him to establish the Group "when you deem it convenient and practicable to do so."[64] By the end of July 1944 Bradley's span of control had widened sufficiently to justify activation of the Group. On July 20th Eisenhower arrived at Bradley's headquarters for a briefing on the breakout of allied forces after the invasion. The First Army war map, now crowded with division flags, suggested the time was right for the group to come on line. Bradley chose the first of August as the date to uncase the colors.[65]

The First Army Group Headquarters was still in England in early July with a dual mission; await Bradley's order to deploy

and play a role in the Overlord grand deception plan. Eisenhower created a magnificent hoax to make the German high command believe the main attack would come through the Pax de Calais. The allied deception plan included posturing the First Army Group to lead the main invasion and fix a large portion of the German army poised for the Calais attack. So broad reaching was the deception, that General Patton was used as the group commander. After Patton deployed his real command, the 3d Army, the War department continued the deception by sending General Leslie J. McNair to replace him. When McNair was killed on a tour of the allied front on July 25th, he had to be secretly buried to preserve the deception. To continue the hoax as long as possible, Bradley redesignated his First Army Group as the Twelfth before deploying it in Late July 1944.[66]

Having contributed indirectly to the effort already, the long awaited 12th Army Group was constituted on 1 August 1944 on the same French soil as General Pershing's Group twenty five years before. Unlike Pershing who reluctantly established a group of armies, Bradley was quick to recognize the great command and control advantage it gave him. By September 1, 1944, his Central Army Group consisted of the First, Third and Ninth U.S. Armies, commanded by Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, and Lieutenant General William Simpson, respectively. The war now belonged to the

warriors. Eisenhower may have been the chairman of the board, but Bradley and his lieutenants were the warfighters. Even Time magazine recognized from the beginning the difference between Eisenhower and Bradley, recognizing the later as the "doughboy who must finally take the ground."[67]

Given the heavy hand of politics and national jealousies that characterized the war through the summer of 1944, it was only a matter of time until someone would find the Achilles heel in the British and American relationship. By mid-August, the British and American press were firing sanguineous shots across each others bow over the relationship between Bradley and Montgomery.

It was no secret among the allied planners that shortly after the invasion, U.S. forces would build quickly into two Armies and an Army Group, commanded by a coequal with Montgomery.[68] Once the 12th Army Group was established, Eisenhower made the decision to allow Montgomery to continue operational control until SHAEF headquarters could deploy onto the continent. Eisenhower then would assume direct control over both British and U.S. Groups. In mid-August SHAEF naively allowed press correspondents to announce that Bradley and Montgomery were now equals in command, which began near open warfare in the press.[69] The British press complained that

coequal status was a demotion for Montgomery.[70] American newspapers argued that US efforts now outpaced the resources the British had committed. Hence, it was logical for the U.S. to be on an equal footing with the British,[71] the same test Churchill created to determine the nationality of the supreme commander, almost a year earlier.

During the battle of the two presses, Montgomery was trying, in vain, to convince Eisenhower of a British attack along the Western front, then across the northern German heartland. In great frustration when Eisenhower disagreed, he even suggested that Eisenhower relinquish complete ground command to Montgomery.[72] To his great discredit, Montgomery allowed the press argument to continue, knowing fully that the command arrangement proceeded according to the original plan.[73] As a result of the growing argument, Marshall wrote to Eisenhower of the need to take direct control.[74] The strategy worked. The press bickering stopped when SHAEF moved to the continent and assumed direct control on 1 September, the day the war in Europe entered its sixth year. Through the intercession of General Marshall once again, Bradley's position was preserved. The potential political flap that could easily have arisen, was squelched in time. If Marshall had allowed the bickering to rage on, history could have been rewritten to subordinate Bradley to Montgomery, which could have hidden him and the Twelfth Army

group to an inconsequential role in the history of World War II.

The Twelfth Army Group would achieve an honored place in the annals of the war. In the next nine months, it would distinguish itself, and its commanding general, by fighting its way through Paris, Verdun, Luxemburg, and Belguim, before ending its trek in Wiesbaden at the end of the war.[75] The Twelfth Group fought the war astride Montgomery's Twenty First Group. When the U.S. force grew even larger, Eisenhower formed the U.S. Sixth Army Group, with General Devers in command. The war ended with Montgomery, Bradley, and Devers forming the north, central, and south Army Groups, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

The most important conclusion to be drawn from an exhaustive look at Army Groups is the most obvious one. In each of the three cases included in this analysis, the Group that was formed seemed to be the right idea. It is difficult to conceive what would have happened if Sherman's three armies would have been turned loose to run helter skelter through the south, reporting directly to Grant hundreds of miles away. Clearly, one commander in charge made the most sense then, and it does today, even in retrospect. There simply is no better command and control mechanism at any level than one man at the top calling

the shots. The very idea of an enemy commander confronted with a well organized group of armies is an overwhelming thought. In fact, so respected was the Group that it was used as part of the grand deception plan of World War II. Without firing a shot, the First U.S. Army Group fixed a sizeable German force at Calais while the true main attack occurred at Normandy.

Complementing the single commander concept is the indisputable fact that groups have always been successful, to varying degrees. On the negative end of the success scale, General Pershing merely limped along to the end of World War I with his Army Group. Pershing's army was ill prepared to land troops on the European continent and fight a major war. His officers were poor. His troops were inexperienced.[76] His personal mission was too large, and Pershing was responsible for training for war and simultaneously fighting, tasks that the army separates today to allow the battlefield commander complete freedom to concentrate on the war.

The Clauswitzian philosophy did not formally receive a fair hearing in the U.S. Army until the 1970's. But his tenets for military success requiring a full commitment from the economic, military, and political facets of a nation would have predicted the disaster Pershing found himself involved in at the beginning of World War I. It is difficult today to conceive of the

naivete' that overwhelmed the federal government during the first World War. Strategic planning and cohesive military and diplomatic discussions were non-existent. "It was not until 1938, that the State, War, and Navy Departments established a standing liaison committee for mutual consideration of policy."[77] Even then, despite the lessons of the war, the committee was only marginally successful. Translating their work to the battlefield, a failure to cohesively formulate and execute strategy at the highest levels of government left Pershing as the man for all seasons. He was at once a fighter, trainer, diplomat, and strategic planner. But, even though stretched too thin, he was successful. At best though, judging the advantage of grouping armies by the Pershing era is inconclusive. It is necessary to look to Sherman and Bradley to draw meaningful conclusions.

Sherman, beginning in the summer 1864, and Bradley, eighty years later, were unqualified successes. Both commanded army groups that succeeded over a formidable enemy, and over an extended period of time in a singularly focused campaign. During the Atlanta campaign, Sherman led his 100,000 man group of armies against a concentrated, dug in, 60,000 man army of the Tennessee, led by General Johnston.[78] Bradley, on the other hand led his half a million man strong twelfth Army Group incessantly against the heart of a massive German army in a series of offensives that

lasted for ten months.[79] In sharp contrast to Pershing's Army Group, Sherman and Bradley are notable because of the success of their groups. Whether success is a direct function of the forming of the various groups or not, it remains that they won. There is some logic then in trying to hang on to something that has been successful. But, as the third millennium is about to begin we must question the contemporary affordability of such formations.

As war becomes more and more complex the size of the commander's staff seems to increase accordingly. The media and the politicians add complicated dimensions to the battlefield commander. While Sherman had media problems, news traveled slowly in 1864. Any impact the media had on the Atlanta Campaign, came from after the fact reporting. Politically, Sherman was protected by his mentor, Grant, who sat favorably with the president. Pershing was not so fortunate. While news did not travel quickly compared to today, Pershing still had to contend with U.S. politicians who wanted to assume war away initially, and later with foreign politicians who blamed Pershing for the ill-prepared American Army. Like Sherman, Bradley was protected from politics by his mentor, Marshall, and his boss, Eisenhower. The press generally supported him, and even solidified his reputation as the G.I. general. But, even Bradley was almost short circuited by a foreign and domestic press at

odds with one another. Commanders tend to increase the size of their staffs to deal with such problems.

It is hard to visualize a standing group of armies in the current U.S forces. Our structure simply will not accommodate another large headquarters that would undoubtedly grow far beyond even the most austere of beginnings. Even Bradley admitted he could not corral headquarters growth. "In Wiesbaden shortly after the war ended I was astonished to find more than 900 officers listed as part of the Army Group staff and special troops."[80] Today's groups would fare no better.

As General Yeosock reports, his 3d Army headquarters was split between active and reserve soldiers. A group headquarters would be equally split, making it difficult to train and deploy together, thereby making its usefulness questionable.

Authorization is another problem. An Army Group headquarters is organized under a Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) rather than a Table of Organization and Equipment(TOE).[81] Units organized by a TOE are combat units. But, the highest level of TOE in the army is the corps headquarters leaving the EAC units to compete in the TDA environment rather than the more lucrative TOE environment.

Once doctrine sets the course for construction of the TOE, subsequent changes to manning and equipment are minimal. On the other hand, TDA's are not doctrinally based and are much more susceptible to constant tinkering to achieve resourcing efficiency, and to the budget cutters axe. Given the seemingly insurmountable problem of headquarters growth, active and reserve mix, and incessant organizational changes in TDA units, the potential for the army group surviving is minimal. But, all is not lost since technology is once again providing adequate alternatives.

The need to command and control formations has been paramount since the early Romans began fighting with individual soldiers exercising some independence from their parent unit. Any commander knows that battlefield success depends upon a complex interaction of many variables, not the least of which is his ability to pass and receive up to date information to and from his subordinate units.

For thousands of years, commanders only communicated with subordinates within earshot, or along a line of sight. Sherman communicated with telegraph, messengers, and reflecting mirrors. While comparatively advanced in technological complexity, communications in Viet Nam were far from perfect. Even into the 1970's commanders struggled with unreliable, vacuum tube

technology in its radios. But, the advent of satellite reflectors serviced by mega-channel carrying lasers, relegate age old communications problems to the history books.

Commanders today can see the enemy electronically, and instantaneously transmit orders to subordinates, who just as quickly adjust tactical plans. In light of such technological revolution, one can reassess the capabilities of headquarters formed to simultaneously synchronize current battles, plan future battles, and reduce command and control to its least common denominator. If General Eisenhower had the same communicating power in 1944, that General Schwarzkoph had during Desert Storm, he could have commanded the ground armies himself, as did Schwarzkoph. Technology, combined with how we organize the Department Of Defense go hand in hand to overcome the age old obstacle that command and control presents.

"Jointness" is the vogue buzzword for interservice cooperation both on and off the modern battlefield. It grew out of the notion that the world would be divided among five combatant commanders-in-chief (CINC), subordinate only to the National Command Authorities, who would command the battle in their respective area of interest.[82]

Joint commanders, with appropriate forces from the breadth of the armed services, are the war captains of the U.S. defense. Jointness is how the U.S. goes to war. No matter what the conflict, no matter where it is, or how big the fight, it will occur in a CINC's region. Consequently, the first major headquarters in any fight is the CINC and his staff, even if he provides command and control from a U.S. homebase. The CINC decides how the forces will be organized. And, it is the CINC who would decide to create subordinate armies, or a subordinate Group of Armies. In the modern post cold war world it is unlikely that the U.S. would get into a conflict large enough to have more than one army on the ground at one time. Without several armies, there is no need for a group. Also, the age of rapid communications, and the automation tools available provide the CINC and his staff the command and control necessary to synchronize a battle of near endless complexity. It may be necessary to increase the size of the staff, but the CINC could easily be his own Group Commander. If the battle widens the CINC can merely appoint a Field Army commander, like Yeosock, but let him direct the activities of all the corps in the fight. The old rule of thumb that a Field Army can command two to five corps is no longer valid. The ever expanding automation and communications capability suggests a much wider span of control.

Having argued against the need for an Army Group, it is

necessary to consider those conditions that could revitalize it. First, the size of wars has been reduced in scope specifically because of the demise of the soviet Union. Should another antagonist power emerge on par with the former Soviet Union, the probability of large wars increases.

As the army looks to the future it should learn the lessons of the past. Advances in warfare have historically been driven by technology. Now, for the first time since the introduction of the radio, technology is providing a quantum leap in an army's ability to command and control battle formations. Even with the remote chance of an emerging Soviet type threat, the overwhelming advantage created by communications, still tips the scales in favor of deleting the Group of Armies.

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